

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method of preparing French fried potato pieces comprising the
2 steps of:
3 obtaining chilled, par-fried potato pieces; and
4 surface pasteurizing the potato pieces in a pasteurization apparatus
5 having an exit into a clean room environment.

1 2. A method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein the surface
2 pasteurizing step comprises surface pasteurizing in a pasteurization apparatus
3 selected from the group consisting of an impingement oven, a steam tunnel, an
4 ultra violet light tunnel, and radurization equipment.

1 3. A method in accordance with Claim 1, further comprising:
2 chilling the potato pieces in a clean room environment after the step
3 of surface pasteurizing the potato pieces in a pasteurization apparatus.

1 4. A method in accordance with Claim 1, further comprising:
2 aseptically packaging the potato pieces in a clean room environment
3 after the step of surface pasteurizing the potato pieces in a pasteurization
4 apparatus.

1 5. A method in accordance with Claim 1, further comprising:

2 packaging the potato pieces in a modified atmosphere in a clean
3 room environment after the step of surface pasteurizing the potato pieces in a
4 pasteurization apparatus.

1 6. A method in accordance with Claim 5, wherein the potato pieces
2 packaged in a clean room environment have a shelf life of at least 60 days at
3 refrigerated temperatures.

1 7. A method of preparing French fried potato pieces comprising the
2 steps of:
3 obtaining chilled, par-fried potato pieces; and
4 surface pasteurizing the potato pieces in a pasteurization apparatus
5 having an exit into a clean room environment, the surface pasteurizing providing
6 at least one final microbial count selected from the group consisting of:

7 less than 1.0-3.0 log CFU/g aerobic plate count;

8 less than 1.0 to 1.0 log CFU/g coliforms;

9 less than 1.0 to 1.0 log CFU/g *Escherchia coli*;

10 less than 1.0 to 1.0 log CFU/g *Staphylococcus aureus*;

11 less than 1.0 to 1.0 log CFU/g molds; and

12 less than 1.0 to 1.0 log CFU/g yeasts;

13 wherein the potato pieces are negative for *Listeria monocytogenes*,
14 *Salmonella*, *Clostridium botulinum*, *Escherichia coli* O157:H7, and
15 *Staphylococcus aureus*.